

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 000993

SIPDIS

FROM USMISSION UNESCO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [AORC](#) [SOCI](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL PARRIES WITH EXECUTIVE BOARD IN QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

1. Summary: On January 19, 2006 the UNESCO Executive Board met for an information meeting with UNESCO Director-General (DG) Matsuura. Members of the Executive Board were invited to submit questions in advance of the meeting. Rather than answer questions directly, the DG read prepared remarks that highlighted activities since the November 2005 General Conference. (Copy available from IO/UNESCO)

2. There were three topics that warrant special mention -- normative instruments, the G-8 Summit and Education Sector reform. Although the DG stressed that there would be a "pause" on normative instruments, he also suggested that a convention on bioethics might be needed. The Moroccan Delegate, Vice-President of the Arab Group, questioned whether such a "pause" has been agreed to. The Canadian Ambassador pressed repeatedly on what action the Secretariat would take to encourage the ratification of the Cultural Diversity Convention. Education-related questions used up more than half the time allotted for questions and answers. There was much interest in UNESCO's role at the G-8 Summit in June 2006 and in UNESCO Education Sector reform. Ambassador Oliver used the session to press for accountability, including in the awarding of UNESCO prizes. Other delegations took issue with the format of the question and answer session itself, saying it did not facilitate exchanges. End Summary.

The DG speaks - "I don't claim to have answered all your questions."

3. In the DG's opening remarks, he used the 60th anniversary of UNESCO as the backdrop to restate that UNESCO is an irreplaceable organization with an all-encompassing mandate, which is indispensable to the UN. The "exalting paradox" of the tensions between the intellectual and the technical, the global and the local makes UNESCO unique. In the area of Education, the DG touched on the November meeting in Beijing of the High Level Group on EFA. The focus of that meeting was on literacy. UNESCO presented a draft Global Action Plan for comment. The final plan will be presented at the E-9 Ministerial Conference in Monterrey, Mexico in February. More importantly, it was announced at the Beijing meeting that EFA would be on the agenda at the July 2006 G-8 meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia. The DG also spoke about the important work UNESCO is doing on tsunami warning and mitigation systems. He stressed the

SIPDIS

absolute importance of cooperation among nations in sharing data among the various systems.

4. The DG tried to put the best face on a recent setback regarding UNESCO's role in the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. In 2001, the UN General Assembly made UNESCO the lead agency in this area. More recently, however, UNESCO was not included on a High-Level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations created by the UN Secretary-General. The DG said this is a vast and complex field where no one organization can pretend to have a monopoly. Similarly, the DG touched on UNESCO's role after the WSIS meeting in Tunis, stressing the role UNESCO will play in cooperation with other UN agencies. The DG was pleased with the recognition afforded UNESCO for its work and expertise in post-conflict areas. The International Conference on Education in Iraq highlighted the importance of education. He also pointed to successes in Afghanistan. Finally, he mentioned restoration of cultural sites in Kosovo -- where the U.S. is the major donor.

5. On administrative issues, the DG noted that reform at the UNESCO Office in Brazil is underway. The DG will make a progress report at the April 2006 Executive Board meeting. The DG made a plea to the Member States to fund the \$25 million special account to support UNESCO programs. This "reinforcement" makes up the difference between the budget request of \$635 million and the approved zero-nominal-growth budget of \$610 million. A set of guidelines on how to make donations was distributed at the meeting (available from IO). (Comment. The Education Sector asks for \$16 million in supplemental funds, all for priority programs. This is

somewhat typical of UNESCO Secretariat ploys - funding nonessential programs and pet projects from the approved budget and asking for supplemental funds to support priorities. End Comment.) In closing, the DG made a pitch for the vision and benefits of decentralization and reform at UNESCO.

16. Regarding the pause in normative instruments over the next biennium, the DG said UNESCO should focus on ratifying and implementing recently adopted instruments. He mentioned, though, that a normative instrument on bioethics might be warranted in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the Human Genome Project.

Some Express Continued Support for Normative Instruments

17. During the question and answer session, it appeared that the pause in normative instruments over the next biennium does not sit well with several Delegations. Morocco professed surprise at the DG's assertion that a pause had been agreed, and said this issue should be addressed at the Executive Board. In general, the DG responded that the biennium would focus on programs, decentralization and reform. Further, the General Conference did not direct the Secretariat to develop any new instruments other than a set

SIPDIS
of non-binding principles regarding cultural objects displaced during World War II. Finally there are a number of normative instruments -- including in the cultural domain -- awaiting ratification and implementation.

18. India also took exception to the pause in normative instruments, voicing support for an instrument on the protection of the rights of broadcasting organizations. (Note: The U.S. position is that this issue belongs to the World Intellectual Property Organization, not UNESCO. End Note)

19. Indonesia expressed support for follow-up on the Jakarta Declaration on basic education as a human right. This declaration resulted from a conference of Indonesian education specialists and UNESCO staff in December 2005. It was unclear as to whether the Ambassador from Indonesia was actually advocating a new instrument or simply follow-up from the meeting. The DG expressed a need for discipline in the process for initiating normative instruments. (Comment. This needs to be a process where the agenda is driven by Member States, not ministers for education from a regional meeting. End Comment)

110. Canada intervened three times about ratification of the Cultural Diversity Convention. The Canadian Ambassador first asked about the UNESCO Secretariat's plans for the ratification of the Convention. The DG responded with an historical overview of the six conventions passed since 1968 that are awaiting ratification. Putting the Cultural Diversity Convention on equal footing with other conventions prompted a second intervention by the Canadian Ambassador. He reminded the DG of the urgency felt by many Delegations regarding cultural diversity. In his third intervention, the Canadian Ambassador opined that UNESCO's role is not simply to approve normative instruments at General Conferences with no follow up. He asked the DG if he agreed that passing conventions and not seeing them through is a waste of time.

111. Comment. The Cultural Diversity Convention may have taken the wind out of UNESCO's sails for the moment. For the next biennium, the General Conference only called for one non-binding instrument regarding cultural objects displaced during World War II. Some delegations are now backtracking and attempting to rewrite history concerning their pet projects. The U.S. Delegation will insist that this backtracking not gain momentum. Our strategy will be to focus on programs and the positive aspects of UNESCO actions. End Comment.

Education: Focus in G-8 Role and Sector Reform

112. Education took up more than half the entire session. Two items dominated, the G-8 Summit and the proposed Education Sector reforms. Although Delegations were interested in UNESCO's role in the 2006 G-8 Summit, the DG had few details and did not clearly define what role UNESCO would play.

113. Regarding Education Sector reforms, the DG reinforced the point that the reforms announced by ADG Smith at a January information meeting, are limited to the management/administrative aspects of the Sector. Programs mandated by the General Conference and Executive Board will

not be altered. Rather, the goal is to make those programs more effective. The DG urged Delegations with concerns to engage in bilateral consultations with the ADG for Education.

14. The DG was challenged by one Delegation on the decision to move Anti-Doping in Sport from the Education Sector to the Social and Human Sciences Sector without consulting the Executive Board. He responded by saying that anti-doping had traditionally been a social sciences topic. Further, given the importance of achieving EFA goals, the Education Sector did not need the additional distraction of anti-doping. The DG went on to mention a memorandum of understanding between UNESCO and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), who will run the program.

Science: A Plea From Africa for Tsunami Coverage

15. In response to the DG's extended plea in his opening remarks for cooperation and sharing of data among tsunami warning systems, African nations asked if the tsunami warning systems could be extended to the African coasts. The DG responded that this might be possible after those areas most prone to tsunamis are covered by the system.

U.S. Questions: Pressing for Accountability and Discipline

16. The U.S. submitted four questions before the meeting and Ambassador Oliver asked several questions during the "debate." In general the U.S. questions concerned procedural consistency and accountability and served as a reminder that organizational discipline is part of the overall reform process.

17. The written questions concerned the awarding of UNESCO prizes in the wake of the decision to award the 2005 Jos Mart Prize to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, a question the DG did not answer; use of the UNESCO name and logo; the availability of a UNESCO calendar of events and timetable for the medium-term strategy process. From the floor, Ambassador Oliver asked about the relationship between UNESCO and its affiliated institutions - field offices, education institutes, NGOs, UNESCO publications and UNESCO prizes. Specifically, how is each accountable to UNESCO? In addition, why was the link between education, teacher training and HIV/AIDS prevention not even mentioned in the DG's remarks? Finally, she asked if the \$1 million donation from China, announced in Beijing, would go into the special account for the \$25 million UNESCO is looking to raise?

18. The question about the medium-term strategy (2008 - 2013) was one of the few written questions answered by the DG in his remarks. He asserted that the questionnaire would be sent out to Member States, National Commissions, NGOs and IGOs by the end of February 2006. A series of five regional consultations will follow in May-June and questionnaires are due back to UNESCO by mid-July. Draft recommendations will be available in August and a first draft of the new medium-term strategy will be presented at the October Executive Board meeting.

19. In terms of accountability, the DG mentioned a forthcoming "accountability framework" but cautioned that it would perhaps be best not to be "too stingy" with the UNESCO name on publications. The DG agreed with the important link between HIV/AIDS and education. The DG suggested that Ambassador Oliver contact the Chinese Ambassador regarding the \$1 million. (Note: In the afternoon session the Chairman of the Executive Board, who is the Chinese Minister of Education, said the \$1 million would be used for capacity building in Africa. The funds will be divided between training facilities, research, fellowships and operations. The question about the special account was never answered. We later learned that although the \$1 million was announced at a UNESCO meeting, it will take the form of bilateral aid that does not involve UNESCO at all. End Note)

UNESCO Snubs

20. Comment: The stated support for normative instruments by a few key Delegations is worrisome. But Member States also focused on a series of "snubs" in the areas of Education and Culture. These include: the fact that the Education Sector was cited for not fulfilling its leadership role in EFA by a UN Joint Inspection Unit report, and the fact that UNESCO was not selected to participate in the UN High-Level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations. The debate at the question and answer session underscores Member States' awareness of the need for UNESCO to be more effective as an organization. Anxiety about UNESCO's

importance in the UN system seems high and this could cause more member states to push for more normative instruments to feel that they are making a difference. Meanwhile, the Mission will continue to focus on program successes as the best way to improve UNESCO's faltering reputation, rather than on normative instruments, which as the DG stressed, often remain un-ratified. End Comment.

OLIVER